

# Growth Inducing Impact of the Proposed 2030 RTP

## 5.0.1 Background

CEQA requires that an EIR discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the environment surrounding the project. CEQA requires this discussion to include ways in which a project would remove obstacles to population growth or encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment (CEQA Guidelines §15126.2[d]).

The analysis of growth inducing impacts of the proposed 2030 RTP differs from other project-level growth inducing analyses. The main difference is that the proposed 2030 RTP is a large-scale regional plan. While in most growth inducing analysis, the potential growth impacts are readily identifiable and quantifiable, the analysis of growth inducing impacts of the proposed 2030 RTP is more nebulous as future development that may result in the proposed 2030 RTP facilitated project areas is not known. The RTP is meant to facilitate and coordinate specific transportation development projects. Growth inducing impacts of such a project could include the direct environmental impacts of projects that the proposed 2030 RTP would facilitate as well as the potential growth caused by those projects. While this EIR need not predict speculative effects of the proposed 2030 RTP, "An EIR must analyze the growth-inducing impact of a project, including reasonably foreseeable consequences ..." (Public Res. Code § 21100, subd. (b)(5)). One of the primary functions of CEQA is to prepare environmental review as early in the planning process as possible to enable environmental considerations to influence project, program, or design. The provision or improvements of roadways and other transportation infrastructure, utilities, water, and sewer service to an area can induce growth by removing impediments to development. Once services are extended or improved in an area, economic incentives for development exist.

The proposed 2030 RTP is a long-range plan that contains an integrated set of public policies, strategies, and investments to maintain, manage, and improve the transportation system in the San Diego region through 2030. The RTP is the transportation component of the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP), which is

based on a smart growth framework and outlines the comprehensive, long-term plan for growth in the San Diego region. Smart growth policies encourage higher-density residential uses, employment centers, and mixed-use development adjacent to transit centers and transit corridors. The basic elements and principles of the RCP and proposed 2030 RTP have been designed to facilitate future smart growth and concentrate population growth in areas that would be efficiently served by transportation facilities.

The smart growth concept is the basis for the framework for prioritizing public land use and transportation investments in the region. The smart growth concept identifies approximately 200 areas where smart growth development exists or could be built and provides a basis for planning transportation facilities and transit services in the proposed 2030 RTP. Smart growth areas identified receive prioritized infrastructure investments and transit services to support smart growth. As discussed above, the idea behind the smart growth concept is to direct anticipated growth in areas near employment centers and public facilities to avoid growth in rural areas of the region.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) an EIR should discuss the ways in which a proposed project could:

- Foster economic or population growth;
- Result in the construction of or need for additional housing;
- Remove obstacles to population growth; or
- Encourage or facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment.

## **5.0.2 Economic or Population Growth**

As discussed in detail in Chapter 4.1, Land Use, the proposed 2030 RTP is based on the 2030 Regional Growth Forecasts. Through the year 2030, the region's total population is forecast to increase from the existing population of 3.01 million residents to over 3.98 million residents (refer to Table 4.1-2). To accommodate the increase in residents, it is anticipated that the region's housing stock would need to grow by approximately 288,700 units. SANDAG projects that between 2004 and 2030, the number of housing units within the region will increase to 1,386,227 units. This would represent a total increase of 291,150 units. Similarly, the average household size within the region is anticipated to increase to 2.9 persons per household by 2030.

The proposed 2030 RTP would result in improvements to the regional highway network, regional transit facilities, regional arterial system, local streets, goods

movement facilities, and other mobility improvements throughout San Diego County. As discussed in the proposed 2030 RTP, one of the goals is to provide funding to maintain and preserve the existing transportation infrastructure of the region. A secondary need is the completion of missing links throughout the transportation network. In an effort to improve sustainability, the major roadway and transit improvements of the proposed 2030 RTP are located in urban/suburban areas of the region thereby encouraging planned future growth away from the region's more rural areas. This approach is consistent with the general plan documents of both the City and County of San Diego.

The proposed 2030 RTP is based on the general plans of the region's cities and the County of San Diego. In this regard, these plans are intended to accommodate identified future growth within the region. Although the proposed 2030 RTP was designed to accommodate planned future growth, improvements identified in the plan in more rural areas of the region (including proposed improvements to SR 67, SR 78, I-15 north of SR 78 and I-8 east of El Cajon) could result in population growth in excess of local planning documents as well as potential economic growth by providing service enhancements and reduced delays on the transportation network. Creation of SR 11 has a high potential to foster economic growth along the United States/Mexico border by providing access to areas that were previously inaccessible and providing increased opportunities for cross-border goods transfers. In addition, the overall capacity improvements identified in the more urban/suburban areas of the region, (improvements to SR 52 between I-805 and Santee, I-5 and I-805 improvements within the Golden Triangle and areas just north of where these freeways merge), although designed to accommodate planned growth, could induce growth beyond that anticipated by the general plans of the County of San Diego and cities within the region. As such, the proposed 2030 RTP has the potential to result in substantial economic and population growth impacts and is considered growth inducing, and therefore would cause a significant impact.

The economic/population growth impacts of the proposed 2030 RTP have the potential to cause secondary or indirect effects. Secondary effects include, but may not be limited to:

- increased housing demand;
- increased public services demands such as schools, parks, sewer, solid waste, etc.; and
- increased use of nonrenewable fossil fuels.

The secondary impacts of economic/population growth related to implementation of the proposed 2030 RTP would be analyzed during the environmental review process in accordance with CEQA and lead agency guidelines as individual projects are proposed.

## 5.0.3 Housing

As discussed above, the region is anticipated to have approximately 1,383,803 housing units by the year 2030. The adopted general plans of the cities within the region and the County were utilized to determine the anticipated 2030 population, which helps to determine the needed housing to accommodate the planned growth. As discussed above, the proposed 2030 RTP has the potential to induce substantial population growth. However, the proposed 2030 RTP was developed utilizing smart growth principles. The smart growth concept represents a compact efficient and environmentally sensitive pattern of development that provides people with additional travel, housing, and employment choices by focusing future growth away from rural areas and closer to existing and planned job centers and public facilities.

The proposed 2030 RTP's planned improvements within urban/suburban areas of the region would not foster the need for additional housing. It is the intent of the proposed 2030 RTP to locate residents within areas of the region with existing and planned job centers and public facilities. To this end, SANDAG's RCP, adopted in 2004, serves as a foundation for integrating land uses, transportation systems, infrastructure needs, and public investment strategies within a regional smart growth framework. The proposed 2030 RTP is identified as the transportation component of the RCP. The RCP achieves this through the concept of smart growth. Smart growth areas would have increased density to support a larger population. The potential additional population growth identified above that would be located within urban/ suburban areas is not anticipated to result in the need for substantial new housing as the principles of smart growth would be implemented within these areas, creating housing opportunities at a higher density that could accommodate the potential growth in population.

The proposed 2030 RTP improvements that would be located in more rural areas (improvement to SR 67, SR 78, I-15 (north of SR 78) and I-8 east of El Cajon) could lead to the development of housing units in excess of what is anticipated in local planning documents by providing transportation service enhancements and reduced delays on the transportation network. Although some of the areas are or could be considered smart growth areas, the availability of developable land combined with the increased accessibility to these areas could result in a substantial increase of housing. This is considered growth inducing, and therefore a significant impact.

The housing growth impacts of the proposed 2030 RTP have the potential to cause secondary or indirect effects. Secondary effects include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- loss of agricultural land;

- disturbance of unknown cultural resources;
- disturbance of unknown paleontological resources;
- loss of habitat and open space;
- increased air quality impacts;
- water quality impacts from increased urban runoff and impervious surfaces;
- increased traffic and congestion levels;
- increased traffic and construction noise;
- increased energy demand; and
- alteration of the region's visual character.

The secondary impacts of housing growth related to implementation of the proposed 2030 RTP would be analyzed during the environmental review process in accordance with CEQA and lead agency guidelines as individual projects are proposed.

## **5.0.4 Removal of Impediments to Growth**

As discussed above, the planned improvements of the proposed 2030 RTP may result in population growth. This would be facilitated through the improvements identified in the RTP. The increased capacity of the transportation network would result in potentially reduced travel times that were previously perceived as impediments to growth. Additionally, transportation infrastructure may be expanded into previously unserved areas. An expanded transportation network could facilitate additional housing and population growth, particularly in previously unserved areas, removing impediments to development. This is considered a significant growth inducing impact.

Secondary or indirect impacts associated with the removal of impediments to growth would include, but may not be limited to, those impacts listed under Economic or Population Growth and Housing in Sections 5.0.2 and 5.0.3, respectively. Similarly, the secondary or indirect impacts of the removal of impediments to growth related to implementation of the proposed 2030 RTP would be analyzed during the environmental review process in accordance with CEQA and lead agency guidelines as individual projects are proposed.

## **5.0.5 Other Activities That Could Significantly Affect the Environment**

The potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the improvements identified within the proposed 2030 RTP are discussed throughout this EIR. Where applicable, significant impacts to the environment have been identified and mitigation measures proposed to reduce or avoid the identified impact.

Although the region will grow with or without implementation of the proposed 2030 RTP, the improvements specified in the RTP, if adopted, will substantially improve the region's highway and roadway networks, supporting new or improved regional transit services, and facilitate goods movement. This would remove obstacles to growth in the region and foster additional housing, population, and economic growth particularly in areas identified on the Smart Growth Concept Map. The proposed 2030 RTP has the potential to result in direct and indirect impacts related to growth inducement. There are no mitigation measures available that would avoid or reduce impacts to a level less than significant. Therefore, these impacts are considered a significant and unavoidable.